



*Rhagoriaeth i bawb - Excellence for all*

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg  
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate  
for Education and Training in Wales

**Report on visit  
Level of follow-up activity: significant improvement**

**Ysgol Ardudwy  
Ffordd y Traeth  
Harlech  
Gwynedd  
LL46 2UH**

**Date of visit: September 2013**

**by**

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and  
Training in Wales**

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**The monitoring team**

Ray Owen	Reporting Inspector
Gareth Wyn Jones	Team Inspector
Kevin Adams	Team Inspector

## Outcome of visit

It is judged that Ysgol Ardudwy has made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the core inspection in May 2012.

As a result, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector for Education and Training in Wales is removing the school from any follow-up activity.

## Progress since the last inspection

### **Recommendation 1: In key stage 3, raise standards and improve performance in English and most of the foundation subjects that are lower than the standard in similar schools**

This recommendation has been largely addressed.

Since the time of the core inspection, standards in key stage 3 continue to show a trend of improvement and the 2013 performance at Level 5+ and Level 6+, places the school in the top quartile in comparison with similar schools in each core subject and foundation subject. In 2013, the core subject indicator is higher than the averages for the family, the Local Authority, and Wales, and shows considerable improvement over four years. Level 5+ performance in English has risen considerably over the last four years and the school has moved from quartile 4 in 2010 to the highest quartile this year. In addition, in this indicator, performance at level 6+ and Level 7+ is in the highest quartile in 2013.

The school now has more effective arrangements to ensure that all pupils attain their targets across the subjects, especially those who underachieve. In addition, although the data shows that the gap between boys and girls is decreasing, the school continues to focus thoroughly on the performance of boys in key stage 3. A more thorough system of scrutinising pupils' books is now a part of all teachers' regular practice. In order to ensure that all pupils improve their spelling, writing and reading skills, additional sessions are in place on the timetable. On the whole, evidence in pupils' books shows that the standard of spelling, punctuation, grammar and vocabulary is good and there is a great deal of extended writing in a variety of subjects.

### **Recommendation 2: Raise standards and improve performance in English, mathematics and science in key stage 4 and improve the level 2 threshold including English or Welsh and mathematics and the core subject indicator**

This recommendation has been largely addressed.

In key stage 4 over the last three years, and also since the core inspection, pupils' performance in the main indicators has made good progress. The results for GSCE 2013 have not been verified.

In English, level 2, there has been an increase from 44.2% A\*-C in 2011 to 75% A\*-C in 2013. This places the school in the top quartile in comparison with similar schools in terms of free school meals. In mathematics at level 2, considerable progress has

been seen, from 32.7% A\*-C in 2011 to 66.7% A\*-C in 2013, which places the school in the top half in comparison with similar schools in terms of free school meals. In science at level 2, there has been very good progress from 46.2% A\*-C in 2011 to 87% A\*-C in 2013. This places the school in the top quartile in comparison with similar schools in terms of free school meals. In those indicators, which include Welsh or English and mathematics at level 2, there has been progress from 30.8% A\*-C in 2011 to 61% A\*-C in 2013. This places the school in the top half in comparison with similar schools. Improvements are considerable and place the school higher than the average for the Local Authority and Wales in each one these indicators.

The school has operated successfully on a number of issues, including appointing new heads of department to the three departments. Additional classes have been arranged in mathematics to review GCSE work and an intervention programme for reading in English has been established. In science, there is a successful emphasis on effective teaching and learning and good quality documentation. The lessons that were observed, pupils' work in their books, and the opinion of pupils on the School Council, confirm the positive effect on teaching and standards.

Performance in Welsh since 2011 has varied but is positive on the whole. However, there is a substantial difference in 2013 between the performance of boys and girls of 30% in the A\*-C indicator and boys underperform. This is the greatest difference between the performance of boys and girls in the core subjects.

**Recommendation 3: improve the provision and pupils' progress in the skills, focusing specifically on literacy and numeracy throughout the school**

This recommendation has been partly addressed.

Since the core inspection, the school has introduced a number of appropriate strategies in order to improve planning for developing pupils' skills across the school. Schemes of work and lesson plans now identify relevant opportunities for developing skills in all subjects. However, there is inconsistency between the subjects in terms of grades; plans identify specific aspects of the skills that it is intended to develop. The school has arranged relevant training sessions for teachers on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. It has also carried out lesson observations, focusing on literacy and used the findings of this process as a basis for further guidance for teachers. The school plans effectively for improving reading, spelling and number skills of those pupils who are at lower levels when starting at the school.

As a result of this planning, pupils have a range of appropriate opportunities to develop their skills across the curriculum. All subjects contribute to developing literacy, including introducing an appropriate range of extended writing tasks. Planning for developing pupils' numeracy across the subjects has begun more recently but is developing appropriately. Once again, there is some inconsistency in the practice of different departments and teachers.

Pupils' literacy skills are generally good. Most pupils listen carefully to their teachers and fellow pupils, and respond appropriately. They communicate clearly and answer questions in lessons and the majority use subject vocabulary confidently. Pupils

have appropriate reading skills to enable them to undertake a range of tasks successfully. Written work, including extended writing tasks, are generally good, although spelling, grammar or mutation errors continue to hinder the work of many pupils at times.

The improvement in the standard of pupils' skills is reflected in the results of tests and teachers' assessments. The performance in KS3 in English and Welsh as a first language has improved considerably over recent years so that the school is in the top quartile in 2013 in comparison with similar schools. School data shows good improvement in many pupils' skills throughout KS3, especially those who have received additional support from the school. In 2013 also, high proportions of Year 11 pupils gained qualifications at level 2 in communications and numeracy.

**Recommendation 4: Raise the standards of teaching from adequate to good or better, including lesson observations and monitoring quality**

This recommendation has been partly addressed.

The standard of teaching is good or better in many of the lessons that were observed during the visit. Excellent features were seen in some lessons, for example very detailed planning, challenging tasks, effective use of learning materials and close attention to pupils' development and progress. Most teachers establish a good working relationship, plan appropriately, explain the purpose of the work effectively and use an appropriate range of teaching methods and materials.

Teaching is a little less effective in some lessons, usually the lessons of temporary teachers or newly qualified teachers. Although there are good features in these lessons, in general there is not enough pace to ensure good progress or enough use of strategies to ensure that pupils of various abilities achieve appropriate standards.

Since the inspection in 2012, the school has developed a number of suitable strategies in order to improve the quality of teaching. A group of teachers and pupils have co-operated to agree on the features of a good lesson and have shared their findings with all teachers. The school has strengthened its arrangements for observing lessons. All teachers are now observed on a termly basis and they also all have opportunities to observe other teachers. Joint observations, with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher or an external specialist, have helped to develop teachers' observation skills. Where adequate teaching is seen, the school arranges appropriate support for teachers, for example by pairing them with another teacher at the school or arranging for them to work with a teacher in another school.

**Recommendation 5: Improve the consistency and quality of the marking throughout the school**

This recommendation has been largely addressed.

The quality of marking is good on the whole, with better consistency in quality and detail of teachers' corrections and comments across the school. A new policy has been developed with staff, which is a useful document to ensure compliance between teachers in their practice. Good and detailed emphasis is placed upon correcting

spelling and grammar errors, and this is a prominent feature within Welsh and English classes.

Regular opportunities are provided for pupils to self-assess, and to assess the work of their peers, using relevant criteria, in about half of the subjects. In these subjects, pupils often develop the effective criteria themselves in discussion with their teachers. This practice strengthens their awareness of how to improve their work well.

Since the core inspection, the quality of teachers' comments on pupils' work is more relevant, and there is clearer direction for pupils on how to improve their work in the majority of the books. However, in a minority of cases, pupils do not correct or redraft their work sufficiently as a follow-up to teachers' comments.

Managers at all levels scrutinise the quality of marking in pupils' work books regularly and more occasionally. Governors are also part of this successful process. The detailed reports that summarise the findings of scrutinising books are useful. Useful inter-departmental meetings have been arranged within the school, in order to support teachers in small departments, and to standardise work and raise expectations.

The assessment procedure in key stage 3 promotes progress by presenting a more comprehensive picture of each child's progress.

The school operates a system to track pupils' progress across the school well. However, teachers have not developed the tracking system to analyse the variation in boys' and girls' performance thoroughly enough to date, in order to provide an intervention programme.

### **Recommendation 6: Strengthen the role and accountability of middle managers**

This recommendation has been largely addressed.

The school has arranged new systems in order to give more support to middle managers and this is having a positive effect on the commitment of heads of department. The heads of core departments meet with a contact member of the senior team every fortnight and the foundation subject heads meet every month. As a result, middle managers have more accountability and they have been up-skilled in order to observe lessons and scrutinise pupils' work more effectively. Middle managers work together effectively in order to share best practice, and the link with another nearby school provides them with good opportunities to develop their skills and understanding of how to improve standards.

These arrangements have had a positive effect on pupils' performance across the subjects, as can be seen in the results of assessments of end of key stage 3 and key stage 4 examinations in 2013. The progress monitoring systems have been formalised more and middle managers use data better, and are much more familiar with expectations across the subjects. Heads of department now focus more effectively on pupils who underachieve and the need to decrease the difference between boys' and girls' performance. However, there remain issues to be improved

in a few departments, for example being more incisive with planning for further improvements.

### **Recommendations**

In order to maintain this progress and improve upon it, the school should continue to work towards achieving the inspection recommendations that have not yet been addressed in full.